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Anti-Spy Magazine Staff Split

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Political and personal bickering has split the staff of Counter-Spy, a magazine the Central Intelligence Agency partially blamed for the murder of an Athens agency official last December.

Although the magazine's office is closed and four of its seven staff members have resigned, those who remain said the magazine will continue to be published by a new staff.

The magazine gained national attention after former CIA Director William E. Colby said it contributed to the assassination of Athens station chief Richard S. Welch. Counter-Spy had listed Welch as a CIA official in its winter issue, and the information later was published in an English-language Athens newspaper.

Those who reject Colby's accusation point out that Welch lived in an Athens house traditionally reserved for the top CIA official. He was not operating under cover.

According to Harvey Kahn, a former Counter-Spy staff member, the split resulted partly from differences over how the staff should be organized.

"Some people, like me, believed that a collective was still viable," he said in a phone conversation. "But other people wanted to abandon the collective process and go into a more traditional, less democratic organization. Instead of going through a power struggle, we decided to quit."

Both current and former members said that personality clashes also contributed to the split. One member reportedly accused other members of being police agents, anticommunists, sexists and liberals.

Some former members gave other reasons for leaving, but Julie Brooks, who has not resigned, said in an interview that political and personal disagreements had been "prevalent" before the break.

Ellen Ray, a current member, said in a phone conversation that she is "positive about the reorganization."

Kahn said that although he hoped the magazine would continue, he thought the new staff probably would have the same personality clashes and disagreements over organization as the old staff.

Counter-Spy is funded partly by Fifth Estate, a group of writers, former CIA agents and former Vietnam war protesters. Author Norman Mailer founded Fifth Estate, a tax-exempt organization, in 1973, and has provided some of its funding.